University of Reading

Introduction

Book or Report Section

Accepted Version

Corke-Webster, J. and Gray, C. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0293-4301 (2020) Introduction. In: Gray, C. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0293-4301 and Corke-Webster, J. (eds.) The Hagiographical Experiment: Developing Discourses of Sainthood. Brill. ISBN 9789004421332 Available at https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/83638/

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See Guidance on citing.

Publisher: Brill

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the End User Agreement.

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

CentAUR

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

Introduction

James Corke-Webster
King's College, London

Christa Gray
University of Reading

Saints and Scholars

> These extravagant tales, which display the fiction, without the genius, of poetry, have seriously affected the reason, the faith, and the morals, of the Christians. Their credulity debased and vitiated the faculties of the mind; they corrupted the evidence of history; and superstition gradually extinguished the hostile light of philosophy and science. Every mode of religious worship which had been practised by the saints, every mysterious doctrine which they believed, was fortified by the sanction of divine revelation, and all the manly virtues were oppressed by the servile and pusillanimous reign of the monks. If it be possible to measure the interval, between the philosophical writings of Cicero and the sacred legend of Theodoret, between the character of Cato and that of Simeon, we may appreciate the memorable revolution which was accomplished in the Roman empire within a period of five hundred years.[1]

This book is about a central pillar of Christian culture: stories about men and women who were considered extraordinary, not (or at least not primarily) because of their birth, status, or physical beauty, but for their exemplary devotion to God. These texts about saints, or hagiographies, began to appear in the early Roman imperial period, but their production exploded in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages and continued long afterwards.

This abundant hagiographical writing has occupied a liminal position in scholarship. Dismissal of its literary quality has sat uneasily alongside enthusiasm for what it can offer the historian. When Gibbon blamed the fall of Rome on the sapping effect that Christianity had on the empire, his caustic tongue singled out the new faith's 'extravagant tales' for special vitriol—in particular, stories about miracles and exorcisms performed by ascetics. On the other hand, he had no qualms about using texts by saints or about saints as sources for his historical narrative when it suited his argument. So, for example, he closely follows Pontius' *Life of Cyprian*, which he judges to be 'consistent … with probability'.[2] And more than once he can be caught paraphrasing the more lurid and prurient stories of hagiography, like that of the martyr tortured by seduction in Jerome's *Life of Paul*.[3]

* Our thanks to the volume's contributors for their thoughts and suggestions on this Introduction.

1 Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Vol. IV: The End of the Roman Empire* (London: Allan Lane, 1994), 428–9 (ch. 37).

2 Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, vol. II, 542, n. 80. The paraphrase of the *Life and Passion of Cyprian* is on pp. 541–5 (ch. 16).

3 Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, 167, vol. II, 539, n. 65 (ch.16); Jerome, *V. Pauli* 3.2–5.

Gibbon's ambivalence—part derision, part exploitation—set the agenda for much later hagiographical study.[4] The suspicion of anything in the hagiographical tradition that is not unambiguously tied to a specific name, place, and cult is embedded in the approach of the Bollandists, who since the seventeenth century have been classifying hagiographical texts and rendering them accessible and usable.[5] In separating the historical wheat from the fictional chaff, their primary motivation has been theological (and perhaps apologetic), their method philological, and their interest historical.[6] But this emphasis on historical authenticity means that the literary qualities of hagiographical texts are for the Bollandists at best a pleasant diversion and at worst a sign of unreliability.

Nearly half a century ago, Peter Brown's seminal article, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity' marked a new era in the study of late antiquity as a new social, cultural, artistic, and religious area of study nestled between the high empire and early medieval world.[7] Since Brown identified the prominence of the Syrian 'holy man' as a key to wider shifts in the overall structures of surrounding society, it is not an exaggeration to claim that late antiquity as an area of study stands upon the shoulders of saints (some of them standing, in turn, on their pillars). The persistent return to Brown's article and its continuing re-evaluation point to the central position the saint holds in late antique history and our understandings of it.[8] For hagiography, the most immediate impact was the development of new investigations into the sociological and anthropological context of the veneration of saints.[9] But while this re-

[4] For a fuller walk through the history of hagiographical research, see most recently Stephanos Efthymiadis, "Introduction", in idem (ed.), *Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, Vol. 1 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 1–14, with further bibliography.

[5] Fundamental contributions are Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les légendes hagiographiques*, (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1905; 2nd edition Brussels: Subsidia Hagiographica, 1927); English translation by Donald Attwater, *The Legends of the Saints ; With a Memoir of the Author by Paul Peeters* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1962); Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires*. (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1921; 2nd edition Brussels: Subsidia Hagiographica, 1966), as well as René Aigrain, *L'hagiographie. Ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire* (Brussels, Société des Bollandistes, 1953 (reprinted with additional bibliography in 2000)).

[6] Flor van Ommeslaeghe, "The Acta Sanctorum and Bollandist Methodology", in Sergei Hackel, *The Byzantine Saint* (London: Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 1981), 155–63. See now too Robert Godding et al., *Bollandistes, saints et légendes. Quatre siècles de recherche hagiographique* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 2007).

[7] Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity", *JRS* 61 (1971), 80–101; reprinted in idem, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 103–52.

[8] Including by its own author; see e.g. Peter Brown, "The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity", *Representations* 2 (1983), 1–25, and idem, "Arbiters of the Holy: The Christian Holy Man in Late Antiquity", in idem, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 57–78; idem, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971–1997", *JECS* 6.3, (1998), 352–76, as part of a special issue of that journal reflecting on Brown's original article. See too e.g. Garth Fagan, "**The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society",** *JHS* 102 (1982), 33–59.

[9] Again, see the seminal work by Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); and on its influence James Howard-Johnston and Paul A. Hayward (eds.), *The Cult of the Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: essays on the contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). For a good summary account of the foundational importance of sociological and anthropological approaches to late antique studies, see Dale Martin, "Introduction", in Dale Martin and Patricia Cox Miller (eds.), *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism and Historiography* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 1–21, at 4–5.

evaluation of the period renewed scholarly interest in late antique texts beyond the traditional boundaries of patristic theology, interest in hagiography remained fundamentally historical (with some important exceptions discussed further below).

This shared interest of the Bollandists and Brown's early work in the historical rather than the literary has a further common cause, namely a starting point that sees cultic veneration as a constitutive part of sainthood, which hagiography either served to instigate or to which it responded.[10] This recognises an important interdependence of cult and hagiography: the presence of saints' tombs, relics, or monasteries would inspire the production of texts, and these in turn could lead to the desire to identify saints or their remains in other places, as well as influencing Christian iconography. But such a prioritisation of cult has meant that research focuses on material phenomena at the expense of literary.[11] And it has also in practice narrowed the literary range of what was studied, since texts that share some features of hagiography—and which might otherwise be counted as hagiographical in form or content—but which have no connection with contemporary cults have been neglected.[12] For this range of reasons, then, our sense of the social and cultural history of late antique sainthood is thus much richer than our aesthetic understanding of its hagiography.[13]

This literary neglect is in some ways entirely understandable. Despite changing scholarly interests and tastes, hagiography has consistently been perceived as credulous (and hence incredible), repetitive, and stridently ideological. Such perceptions are not entirely groundless. First, some of the subtleties of hagiographical texts are bound up with their theological and moral distinctions, which can be difficult to relate to modern literary concerns. Further, it is essentially part of the definition of hagiography that the characters it portrays are more or less perfectly matched in their thoughts and actions with a presupposed set of criteria, namely Christian values.[14] This has consequences for our attitudes as readers: reading a

---

[10] See e.g. Aigrain, *L'hagiographie*, 7–8: 'le saint est un homme qui, par sa correspondance à la grâce divine, a été constitué en état supernaturel de sainteté, mais il faut, pour que l'hagiographe ait à s'occuper de ce qui le concerne, que cet état de sainteté, avec les vertus héroïques qu'il comporte, ait été reconnu par l'autorité de l'Église, reconnaissance qui entraîne comme conséquences les manifestations d'un culte liturgique et public'. In this model, the sequence starts with the saint's sanctity, which reaches its recorded form in hagiography only through the medium of official recognition and ecclesiastical cult. While Brown's model of cult does not hinge on the church's official authority, hagiography is still conceived as secondary to cult, whether official, private, or popular.

[11] The ERC-funded project "The Cult of the Saints", launched in 2014 under the direction of Bryan Ward-Perkins, will include a database of texts in its output, but these text are analysed as evidence for cult, not as works of literature; see http://cultofsaints.history.ox.ac.uk/ [last accessed 19/06/2019].

[12] The recent conference "*Culte des saints et littérature hagiographique: accords et désaccords*", 25–26 September 2015, Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, Paris, specifically investigated those occasions when cultic practices and literary production do not align. The papers from this conference are set to published as Vincent Déroche, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Robert Wiśniewski (eds.), *Culte des saints et littérature hagiographique*. Centre de recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, Monographies (Leuven: Peeters, in press).

[13] It is also true that a nuanced and contextualised literary assessment of hagiography has the potential to further our understanding of the role that these texts played in the cult of saints.

[14] The construction of a *Life* on the scaffold of a pre-existing set of values is exemplified by Marius of Neapolis' *Life of Proclus*, where the author 'explicitly sets out to show how his hero, Proclus, exemplified all the virtues in the Neoplatonic canon from the lowest to the highest (*V. Procl.* 2–3), and this colours his whole approach to his subject' (John Dillon, "Holy and Not So Holy: On the Interpretation of Late Antique Biography", in Brian

narrative text as hagiographical requires the assumption that it has some sort of moral and didactic agenda and seeks to edify its readers accordingly. At the very least, we must usually believe that the text is designed for the readers to admire the subject of the tale, usually as a type of role model.[15] Finally, the shared alignment with a particular set of Christian values means that, even if these do vary, repetition often follows, even if different hagiographical texts select and emphasise different virtues depending on their distinctive persuasive aims.[16]

The influence of the linguistic or cultural turn in the classical disciplines, however, has as elsewhere begun a sea-change in the mainstream study of hagiography.[17] Over the last few decades, monographs have begun to appear in much greater number addressing literary aspects of hagiography.[18] The most recent achievement is the two-volume *Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, whose insistence on the literary value of hagiography is an important corrective to centuries of neglect. As its title suggests, the scope of this volume is limited to the Greek tradition of the Byzantine period, with a noticeably synchronic approach to the literary issues discussed in the second volume. Our collection seeks to supplement this work by introducing Latin texts into the discussion, though Greek, Syriac, and Coptic traditions are also represented, and by focusing for the most part on the development of hagiography in the late antique period. Unlike in the later Byzantine period, where hagiography became an increasingly (although not entirely) stable and recognisable genre, late antique hagiography had not yet settled into fixed patterns, and instead explored a range of innovative combinations of literary form, content and style. This makes late antiquity a particularly promising field for thinking about the literary aspects of writing about saints.

McGing and Judith Mossmann (eds.) *The Limits of Ancient Biography* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006), 155–67, at 160). In our texts this hagiographic expectation can itself be the subject of literary play: see, for example, Staat in this volume on the ethical flaws of the protagonist of Jerome's *Life of Malchus*.

[15] The centrality of this criterion means, of course, that hagiography arguably does not even need to be narrative, but can include any type of representation of an admirable Christian person or set of persons—provided it is evident that their holiness is bound up with their personality, rather than vested in external attributes such as the holding of a priesthood or episcopal see. See the contributions of Williams, Yuzwa, and Wiśniewski in this volume.

[16] In a wide-ranging analysis of commonplaces in Byzantine hagiography, Thomas Pratsch found that no two *Lives* are actually identical: it is never the case that they are distinguishable only by means of differently named protagonist. 'Selbst in denjenigen Fällen, in denen eine jüngere Vita eines Heiligen nachweislich von der älteren Vita eines anderen Heiligen abhängt, also von dieser über weite Strecken abgeschrieben wurde, sind die durch Überarbeitung und Variation entstandenen Unterschiede zwischen der jüngeren und der älteren Vita so groß, daß jeweils von einer eigenen Vita gesprochen werden kann. Mithin besitzt also jede einzelne Vita ihren eigenen, individuellen Charakter': Thomas Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos. Griechische Heiligenviten in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit*. Millenium Studies 6 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2005), 408.

[17] On its rising importance in late antique studies, see Martin, "Introduction", 5–9.

[18] The bibliography amassed before the turning of the new millennium is collected in Christian Høgel, "Literary Aspects of Greek Byzantine Hagiography: A Bibliographical Survey", *SO* 72 (1997), 164–71, but considering only studies of texts produced after AD 500. In many of the fifty-nine titles that Høgel lists literary approaches (defined as 'studies of texts or relations between texts … that concentrate on such phenomena as narrative structures, genres, thematic elements, author and audience, stylistics etc.') play only a subordinate role. More works have appeared since, many of which are referenced in the footnotes that follow, but trenchantly anti-literary historical approaches also persist, for example in Timothy D. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History*, Tria Corda 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010 (2nd ed. 2016)).

Definition and Development of Hagiography

The question of how to define hagiography is a notoriously thorny one.[19] The problem with many definitions is that they are inherently exclusionary—i.e., like the cult-based approaches to hagiography, they necessarily exclude interesting texts that lack these elements but nevertheless in some way, we think, participate in the 'hagiographical'. Those that look, for example, for a cradle-to-grave narrative obviously omit texts that only partially cover a holy life, or which use forms other than the narrative.[20] Accounts focused on the miraculous omit those works of hagiography that focus on the more mundane.[21] And even looser definitions too, such as the idea that hagiographies are those texts that emerge from and seek to enhance religious devotion to saints, presuppose too much about authorial intention, and exclude texts whose purpose is rather murkier.[22]

Our approach instead is founded on a sense of family resemblances. There was, we argue, no fixed template—in late antiquity, at least—for writing about saints; rather, diverse authors reacted to diverse aspects of earlier writings and appropriated, interpreted, and altered them to shape their own view on holiness in their Christian heroes.[23] Since authors made use of some of the same characteristics and some different, early works of hagiography would resemble each other in some ways and not in others. Moreover, as the numbers of such Christian works increased they could echo each other. The resulting collection of works about 'saints'—subjects considered holy in some sense by their authors—[24] need have no one shared feature, but rather are all part of a family that each share some features with each other. Such

---

[19] The problem has been reviewed recently by Claudia Rapp, "The Origins of Hagiography and the Literature of Early Monasticism: Purpose and Genre between Tradition and Innovation," in Richard Flower, Christopher Kelly, and Michael S. Williams (eds.), *Unclassical Traditions. Alternatives to the Classical Past in Late Antiquity*. Vol. 1. Cambridge Classical Journal Supplements 34 (Cambridge, 2010), 119–30. Her functionalist solution privileges didacticism and the *chreia* as the classical form behind hagiography. But it is still one based on common purpose, and thus to some extent exclusionary.

[20] Note, for example, that "Hagiography" and "The literature of the monastic movement" are treated as separate chapters in Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), at 358–61 and 373–81 respectively.

[21] Moses Hadas and Morton Smith, *Heroes and Gods: Spiritual Biographies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

[22] For the latter definition, see e.g. Delehaye, *Les légendes hagiographiques*, 2. Delehaye also in practice ignores most of the earliest texts, on which this volume focuses in particular.

[23] *Contra* Simon Swain, "Biography and the Biographic in the Literature of the Roman Empire", in Mark Edwards and Simon Swain (eds.), *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 1–37, at 36.

[24] Concomitantly, and deliberately, we do not offer a precise and unequivocal definition of hagiography's central figure, the saint, or the holy woman or man, since that definition itself was continually shaped by the literary development we seek to investigate. The subjects of our texts are martyrs and ascetics, monks and bishops, and their ideas of what it means to follow Christ cover a wide range, including dying for one's faith, giving up all worldly claims and possessions, taking social responsibility for the good of the Christian community, working miracles, and attacking intransigent pagans and heretics.

a definition has the benefit of allowing the consideration of a wider range of potential texts and authors into discussions of hagiography.

It also serves to promote a wide rather than a narrow interpretation of the literary origins of hagiography. These 'family resemblances' come from a wide range of earlier Christian and non-Christian works. The stage at which these turned into 'hagiography' is unclear. Classical biography represented a long tradition of life-writing which crossed from the Greek to the Latin tradition, but which by late antiquity was (increasingly) popular in both.[25] Religion—or better the relationship of their protagonist with the divine—had always been fundamental to both Greek and Roman examples, and was also the central element in Hellenistic *theios aner* literature. The late Republic and early empire also saw the emergence of the Greek novels, which follow their protagonists through the life-defining adventures of their early adulthood (and sometimes their childhood, e.g. Longus) and place particular emphasis on their relationship with the divine.[26] As the high empire progressed into late antiquity this increasingly became the central focus, exemplified for example by Philostratus' mid-third century *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*,[27] or philosophical biographies like Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* or Iamblichus' *Life of Pythagoras*.[28] Into this mix we must add panegyric, the non-narrative mode of praise that evolved into the standard form of address to emperors, and in which divine favour for the ruler in question played an ever more important part.

At the same time, the distinctive book culture of Christianity also produced a new array of writings all concerned in some way with the lives of holy individuals. The Gospels, both canonical and non-canonical, have fuelled a huge scholarly industry interested in their debts to earlier forms of both pagan and Jewish life-writing.[29] The *Acts of the Apostles*, a continuation of the *Gospel of Luke* by the same author, has an equally intriguing relationship to previous

---

[25] Swain, "Biography and Biographic", as well as the other essays in that collection. The best overall treatment of the biographical tradition is Tomas Hägg, *The Art of Biography in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[26] Merkelbach went so far as to characterise the novels as 'Mysterientexte': Reinhold Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich and Berlin: Beck, 1963). For subsequent discussions see e.g. Tomas Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 26–7, 101–4; Froma Zeitlin, "Religion in the Ancient Novel", in Tim Whitmarsh (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 91–108.

[27] See in particular Marc Van Uytfanghe, "La vie d'Apollonius de Tyane et le discours hagiographique", in Kristoffel Demoen and Danny Praet (eds.) *Theios Sophistès: Essays on Flavius Philostratus' Vita Apollonii*. Mnemosyne Supplements 305 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 335–74.

[28] See in particular Patricia Cox [Miller], *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man*. The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

[29] For example Dirk Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie. Die vier Evangelien im Rahmen antiker Erzählkunst.* Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 22 (Tübingen: Francke, 1997); Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*. Monograph Series Society for New Testament Studies 70 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992 (2nd ed. with a foreword by W. Stanton Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2004)); Dale Miller and Patricia J. Miller, *The Gospel of Mark as Midrash on Earlier Jewish and New Testament Literature*. Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 21 (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press 1990); Claude Goldsmid Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* (London: Macmillan, 1930); and Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012).

examples of collective biography.[30] Next, the martyr literature of the second and third centuries cast a spotlight on the exemplary deaths of Christian men and women, which itself drew upon earlier biographers' interest in their subjects' deaths, Christian, pagan and Jewish.[31] The same period saw the emergence of apocryphal *Acts*, dramatic tales of love and travel that were in close conversation with the themes of the Greek novels, as well as the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions*, a 'Christian novel'.[32]

Such then was the richness of the literary landscape as, from the third century on, the Roman Empire moved into the late antique period. It is at this point that we start to see the works normally treated as the first works of hagiography. Pontius' mid-third century *Life of Cyprian*, for example, written in Latin, seems to mediate between traditional life-writing and the martyr *acta* in describing not only the death but also the life of its episcopal protagonist.[33] In the Greek world, Eusebius of Caesarea's lost *Life of Pamphilus*, written in the late third century, and his mini 'life of Origen', preserved in Book 6 of his *Ecclesiastical History*, are similar life and death accounts of exceptional Christian heroes specially favoured by divine providence. Athanasius' mid-fourth century Greek *Life of Antony*, his famous account of the desert-bound ascetic hero, is most often seen as the starting point for Christian hagiography. Back in the Latin west, Jerome's triptych of fictional saints' lives—the *Life of Malchus*, the *Life of Paul*, and the *Life of Hilarion*—spark a production line of parallel accounts that would last for centuries.

Our interest in the current volume is neither to identify one such Ur-text as the origin of hagiography, and thus pinpoint the latter's birth, nor is it to dictate on that basis which earlier genre of writing, Christian or not, had the greatest influence upon hagiography, and thereby offer a conventional literary history of formal and thematic categories. We are also not seeking to explain hagiography's birth via either a specific model (or set of models) or a particular historical concatenation of motivating factors. The point rather is that the fact and process of evolution are interesting in themselves. We are interested in the *ongoing* process by which works on hagiography came into being; that is, the decisions that authors of successive hagiographical works made about writing, selecting, arranging, and presenting their material. We have thus called this a study of development rather than of origins, and of an experiment, rather than of an established genre. Many of the key 'transitional texts' of late antiquity are represented—Eusebius' biographical writings, Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, Jerome's narrative trilogy—but others are less well known, and come not just from the late antique but also the

[30] E.g. Justin Taylor, "The Acts of the Apostles as Biography", in McGing and Mossmann, *The Limits of Ancient Biography*, 77–88, discussing, inter alia, the formal affinities of *Luke–Acts* with Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Philosophers* as postulated by Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke–Acts*. Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 20 (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1974).

[31] See e.g. William H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965); but cf. Glen Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), arguing that Christian ideas of martyrdom were largely without precedent.

[32] Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity*, 162–4.

[33] These third century texts are a particular problem for the traditional thesis that Christian cradle-to-death tales depended on the rise of desert monasticism.

medieval period (since development, as opposed to origins, continues well beyond hagiography's formative centuries).

This volume's contribution to literary study of hagiography is as a study of the processes through which hagiography and hagiographies came into being. It takes into account the whole range of Aristotelian causes: material, formal, efficient, and final. We seek to shed light on how particular texts—and more broadly the 'type' of text they represent, in so far as such an affiliation exists—come into being in terms of inspiration, aesthetics, intertextuality, structure, rhetorical strategy etc. As such, the essays below ultimately explore what hagiography is—not because they explicitly ask what counts as hagiography, but because they help reveal the people, forms and techniques that create it.

Who, What and How

Works of hagiography were produced by, with, and for a variety of subjects, authors and audiences, appeal to and employ a range of models and forms, and mobilise a range of strategies and techniques. Some of these came from earlier literature, both Christian and non-Christian; others were novel, or represented new combinations or twists on classical themes. That exciting diversity is, we argue, characteristic of hagiography in general, and it is the neglected and surprising influences and developments in these three areas—persons, forms, and strategies—that the specific papers in this volume aim to explore.

I. The Persons of Hagiography

The essays in Part I consider *who* is involved in hagiographical construction as the subject(s), author, or audience. Each considers some combination of these three. The first of these—the saints—have, unsurprisingly, traditionally been the main focus of hagiographical scholarship. Even if their historicity was the subject of debate, accounts which presented saints' names together with a geographical location and, ideally, an approximate date made the subject of the story a much more solid object of investigation than the often anonymous or pseudonymously recorded author. When it comes to their literary assessment, however, neither saint nor author nor audience has received much praise. Momigliano, for example, saw the characterisation of classical biography—based upon 'the interchange between individual ambitions and political circumstances'—as being replaced by 'mystical experiences and contacts with divine beings' in both Christian and non-Christian later biography.[34] Increasingly, what was important for both authors and readers was was the extent to which the individuals partook in the divine.

[34] Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient Biography and the Study of Religion in the Roman Empire", in idem, *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 159–77, at 176.

Momigliano was of course part of a world still generally committed to a model of late antique decline.[35] While it is true that such characterisation is common to much hagiography,[36] this blanket judgment ignores an extraordinary variety of material that actually contains a very mixed company of unusual and confusing leading men and women. Different ideas about the most important aspects of divinity and devotion, and the different ways in which these ideas interact, mean hagiography is much more diverse than this model suggests. In fact hagiographic texts are themselves often aware of the dangers of homogenised characterisation, and can be caught playing with such expectations in ways that appear to prioritise being thought-provoking and entertainment over on-message ideology. In the extant hagiographical corpus the clean-cut saint of popular imagination rubs shoulders with cavorting, incompetent, petulant and even murderous saints.

The first paper in the collection, that of James Corke-Webster, considers differing approaches to characterisation in some of the earliest attempts to write up the lives of Christian heroes. It argues that Athanasius' famed portrait was produced in response to the earlier hagiographical efforts of Athanasius' opponent in the theological sphere, Eusebius of Caesarea. Their protagonists differ on two crucial points—their education, and their interaction with others. Where Athanasius' unlettered Antony spends his life seeking every greater isolation, Eusebius' portraits of Pamphilus, Origen and others emphasise their abilities in Christian and non-Christian learning, and mobilising them to the benefit of their wider communities. Their approaches reveal a debate over the nature of sanctity from the earliest days, played out in a literary arena by two innovating specialists in the written word who had an eye on both posterity and their own immediate circumstances.

Another promising approach to the untapped potential of the characters in hagiography is narratology (the approach which has produced the best rewards in raising the ancient novel to literary respectability).[37] A recent case study by Annelies Bossu, Koen De Temmerman, and Danny Praet has demonstrated the suitability of hagiographical material for such analysis.[38] Their study of the *Passion of Caecilia* refutes the idea that characterisation in hagiography relies on stereotypes, demonstrating instead that this text paints a complex picture of its heroine by echoing but inverting earlier tropes of erotic narrative.

The second paper, that of Julie Van Pelt, combines such a narratological approach with equally innovative approaches to hagiographical authorship. Traditional work on the latter has

---

[35] It is worth remembering that this article was essentially an appendix to his monograph, *The Development of Greek Biography*. Carl Newell Jackson Lectures (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1971).

[36] See above p. 000 for the role of Christian values in shaping a saint's character.

[37] The definitive account of characterisation in the ancient novel is Koen De Temmerman, *Crafting Characters: Heroes and Heroines in the Ancient Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[38] Annelies Bossu, Koen De Temmerman, and Danny Praet, "The Saint as an Astute Heroine: Rhetoric and Characterization in the *Passio Caeciliae*", *Mnemosyne* 69.3 (2016), 433–52. At the time of writing, Koen De Temmerman is leading an ERC-funded research project at Ghent University, "Novel Saints: Studies in Ancient Fiction and Hagiography", which pursues these questions further across a wide range of hagiographical texts; see http://www.novelsaints.ugent.be (last accessed 19/06/2019). Two members of the project, Julie Van Pelt and Klazina Staat, present their research in this volume.

tended to focus on known individuals and their motivations for writing.[39] Derek Krueger's influential *Writing and Holiness*, however, has ushered in a more sophisticated appraisal of the relationship between hagiographers and their protagonists. Krueger argues hagiography's novel approach to authorship was one of its defining features.[40] Since hagiographies captured the essence of their sacred and thus authoritative subjects, they and their authors gained authority. Writing itself became a salvific activity. In other words, the process of writing hagiography produced new ways of thinking about the literary process. Another important work, Williams' *Authorised Lives in Early Christian Biography*, investigates, against the backdrop of their common purpose to re-enact Scripture, the intrusion of Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa, Athanasius, Jerome and Augustine into the texts they authored.[41] Most recently, Claudia Rapp has investigated the interwoven roles of audience, author and text in the process of making saints present in texts.[42] Rapp posits a parallel relationship between the holy man and his followers on the one hand and between a hagiographical text and its audience on the other.

Van Pelt takes that same parallel in a new direction while employing a narratological approach. She uses the relationship between a common figure in hagiographies, the holy fool, and the crowds with whom he interacts as a lens to consider possible parallels in the relationship between the author and audience of the hagiography. Both, she argues, are engaged in a careful balancing act between misrepresentation—the fool's feigned idiocy; the author's use of fiction—and communication. Van Pelt argues that the character of the fool and his interactions with an intratextual audience are 'good to think with'[43] to help us understand better the various forms of masking used by hagiographic authors as strategies of authorisation, and the complicit role of the audience in making them effective.

Robert Wiśniewski's paper, the third in this first section, considers the characterisation of saints in clerical hagiography—the lives of bishops and presbyters, conceived against monastic hagiography that deals with the lives of monks—alongside their intended audiences. In recognizing that these lives are neutral or even negative about the clerical profession's contribution to sanctity, and that clerical hagiographies rarely try to construct a consistent model for life, he problematises the idea that they were designed as straightforward models for imitation. Here again then the literary approach reveals something indirectly about evolving ideas of sanctity—in this case, that it could not be reached via the clerical life.

---

[39] Most famous, of course, is Athanasius' authorship of the *Antony*, a text for imitation by other monks that was simultaneously its author's weapon against Arianism, his tool to co-opt the saint's charismatic authority to shore up his own institutional authority, and the foundation of an entire vision of the Christian *politeia*. The bibliography here is extensive; see in particular David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

[40] Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

[41] Michael S. Williams, *Authorised Lives in Early Christian Biography: Between Eusebius and Augustine* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[42] Claudia Rapp, "Author, Audience, Text and Saint: Two Modes of Early Byzantine Hagiography", *Scandinavian Journal of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 1 (2015), 111–29, at 115.

[43] For the phrase cf. Claude Lévi-Strauss on animals in *Le totémisme aujourd'hui* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962), 128.

II. The Form of Hagiography

The essays in Part II consider *what* hagiography is, in the sense of the forms and structures chosen to shape and reshape the material presented. It is now generally agreed that discussions of genre in terms of literary categories with well-defined rules for including and excluding texts are not particularly helpful in antiquity. To yield productive results, analysis in terms of genre can be used only to study the expectations associated with particular types of writing, which ancient authors and readers could employ, exploit or frustrate as they chose.[44] This insight has been well-applied to hagiography by, among others, Marc Van Uytfanghe, who advocated getting away from the idea that hagiography is a class of texts with particular formal structures by using the term 'hagiographic discourse' instead.[45]

This is the background to this section's first contribution, that of Alan Ross, which considers the key role played by traditional satire in the early development of hagiographic discourse. Comparing Jerome's *Life of Paul*, a text that samples numerous different genres, with Athanasius' earlier *Life of Antony*, Ross details how the former uses traditional satire to systematically elevate its protagonist at the expense of the latter's. Paul, not Antony, is set up as the first eremitic monk, in a move that also critiques Athanasius as hagiographer. In simultaneously imitating and satirising this early attempt at writing a saint's life, Ross suggests that Jerome made a deliberate and important intervention in the earliest stages of the creation of hagiographic discourse. That intervention on the location of true sanctity was achieved here via a novel experiment with form.

Such experimentation with genre was in fact characteristic of the period more generally. While some traditional forms of writing persisted or even became more prevalent new forms also emerged, and, most intriguingly, various hybrids emerged. Where once this too was seen as one more sign of Rome's cultural decline, the rehabilitation of the period has sparked a surge of interest in these distinctively late antique generic developments.[46] So a 2007 volume on late antique intellectual culture examines the use and reuse of older texts and models in late antique literature, and the exciting collection of essays that stemmed from the 2013 Shifting Frontiers conference is entitled *Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity*. But though remarkably wide-ranging, the former addresses hagiography only tangentially (via the *Instituta Aegyptorum* of John Cassian) and the latter omits it entirely.[47] But experimentation with, and sophistication of, form

[44] An important case study is Averil Cameron, "Apologetics in the Roman Empire—A Genre of Intolerance?", in Jean-Michel Carrié and Rita Lizzi Testa (eds.), *Humana Sapit: études d'Antiquité tardive offertes à Lellia Cracco Ruggini* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 219–27.

[45] Marc Van Uytfanghe, "L'hagiographie: un 'genre' chrétien ou antique tardif?", *AB* 111 (1993), 135–88. A parallel point has been made by Mark Edwards, "Biography and the Biographic", in Edwards and Swain, *Portraits*, 227–34, where 'the biographic' is a trait that can appear in various types of text.

[46] See e.g. Jacques Fontaine, "Unité et diversité du mélange des genres et des tons chez quelques écrivains latins de la fin du IVe siècle: Ausone, Ambroise, Ammien", in Manfred Fuhrmann (ed.), *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'antiquité tardive en Occident*. Entretiens sur l'Antiquite Classique 23 (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1977), 425–82.

[47] J. H. D. Scourfield (ed.), *Texts and Culture in Late Antiquity: Inheritance, Authority, and Change* (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2007); Geoffrey Greatrex and Hugh Elton (eds.), *Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity*

in hagiographical writing more than match that of other late antique literature. This has been well demonstrated by the various forms of interplay between hagiography and historiography revealed in Arietta Papaconstantinou's collection of essays, *Writing 'True Stories'*, but the interplay between hagiography and other genres repays further attention.[48]

The next two papers take up this challenge. Zachary Yuzwa analyses the parts played by epistolographic and dialectical forms in Sulpicius Severus' attempts to write about Martin of Tours. Interactions between epistolography and hagiography are of particular importance, since many of the proto-hagiographical martyr *acta* are preserved as letters (e.g. *The letters of the churches in Lyons and Vienne to the church in Smyrna*, or the letters of Dionysius of Alexandria, all preserved in Eusebius' *History*). And the archetypal hagiography, the *Life of Antony*, is also framed as a letter. Yuzwa starts from the important observation that the *Life of Saint Martin*—the traditional narrative form of hagiography—lacks an ending, in that there is no account of Martin's death. That absence of closure prompts various 'appendices' to Sulpicius' *vita* in a series of letters and the dialogue *Gallus*. This deliberate and repeated delay in describing Martin's death, Yuzwa suggests, frustrates readers' expectations and allows and even insists upon a process of rewriting and rereading that Sulpicius suggests is itself salvific.

Michael Williams paper follows Yuzwa's in considering the hagiographical correspondence of Paulinus of Nola and Sulpicius Severus. In contrast to the death-less *Life of Saint Martin*, there is no hagiographical *Life of Paulinus*, just a letter by the presbyter Uranius, entitled *On the Death of Paulinus*. The letter correspondence itself, Williams suggest, can be read as part of hagiographical discourse. These authors engage in the mutual eulogy often seen as typical of hagiography, while ostentatiously denying their own right to praise. Considering the implicit sincerity or humour of these epistolary exchanges, and the debt owed to classical models of elite correspondence, Williams argues that the essential dialectical nature of the format was key to their strategy. Read in isolation any individual letter is misleading; only when read as part of an ongoing correspondence, where each could rely on his interlocutor reciprocating the praise, can the true dynamic of the auto-hagiography on display here be understood. This 'unusual' hagiographical form is thus only explicable via traditional forms of elite discourse. In both these papers then, form is manipulated in service of the evolving debate over the nature of sanctity.

An understanding of the form of hagiography can also benefit from changing scholarly approaches to late antique aesthetics more generally. Building on the work of Hans Peter L'Orange, Michael Roberts identified a peculiarly late antique concern for alternate repetition

(Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), acknowledging the absence of hagiography at 1. Similarly, in the important collection of essays edited by Lieve Van Hoof and Peter Van Nuffelen (eds.), *Literature and Society in the Fourth Century AD: Performing Paideia, Constructing the Present, Presenting the Self* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), texts concerning saints features only incidentally, mainly in the contributions by Morwenna Ludlow, "Texts, Teachers and Pupils in the Writings of Gregory of Nyssa", 83–102, and Sigrid Mratschek, "A Living Relic for the Bishop of Rome: Strategies of Visualization in a Civil Case", 134–56.

[48] Arietta Papaconstantinou (ed.), *Writing 'True Stories': Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

and variation in late antique poetry.[49] Part of this 'jeweled style' was the increasing value ascribed to the collection and arrangement of smaller items, which he dubbed an 'aesthetics of discontinuity'.[50] What Roberts observed for non-Christian poetry has been identified by Patricia Cox Miller as characteristic too of prose works and, most importantly for our purposes, Christian authors.[51] Interestingly, one of Cox Miller's chosen case studies is the late antique cult of the relics.[52] However, the significance of this aesthetic for the literary side of the cult of the saints, hagiography, has been as yet little explored.[53]

The final paper in this section develops the hypothesis that hagiographical intention can be expressed through a strategy of multiplication. Todd French considers the predilection for collective hagiography in late antiquity. Distinguishing mere florilegia from more deliberately crafted collections, French suggests that this newly favoured form was not simply one dictated by practicalities—the availability of information, for example—but a deliberate aesthetic choice. Taking as his particular subject John of Ephesus' mid-sixth century *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, French argues that the value of the collective work is the space it allows for multiple perspectives to be offered by the same author. That polyphony made such texts a literary space in which audiences could find and engage with multiple viewpoints.

III. The Strategies of Hagiography

Part III considers *how* hagiography achieves its effects, in particular their oft-claimed purpose of combining edification with entertainment, via rhetorical, emotional, and even manipulative devices. While this question is to a certain extent implicit in the two previous sections, here we consider means of eliciting response other than character or form.

In an important monograph, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, Patricia Cox Miller explores the different experimental biographical efforts of two late antique authors, Eusebius and

---

[49] Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), inspired by Hans Peter L'Orange, *Art Forms and Civic Life in the Late Roman Empire*. Translated by Knut Berg and Mrs Berg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).
[50] Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, 61.
[51] Patricia Cox Miller, "'Differential Networks': Relics and Other Fragments in Late Antiquity", *JECS* 6 (1998), 113–38.
[52] That suggestion is taken up by Jaś Elsner in his discussion of the Arch of Constantine: Jaś Elsner, "From the Culture of Spolia to the Cult of Relics: The Arch of Constantine and the Genesis of Late Antique Forms", *PBSR* 68 (2000), 149–84, at 175. Elsner sees the Arch as the first step in a process that would eventually lead to Constantine's burial in a mausoleum surrounded by twelve coffins, representative of the twelve apostles, which was itself the stimulus for the growth of the cult of the saints.
[53] Miller, "Differential Networks", 133–7, does briefly consider some works of collective hagiography (Prudentius' *Peristephanon* and the *Historia Monachorum* in particular). Her fuller treatment of collective hagiography, "Strategies of Representation in Collective Biography: Constructing the Subject as Holy", in Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*. The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 31 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 209–54, is concerned more with questions of characterisation (and essentially affirms Momigliano's judgment; see above n. 34).

Porphyry, to portray the holy man.[54] Eusebius' portrait of Origen was, she suggests, Janus-faced, painting Origen as divinely-inspired Christian scholar and Hellenised *theios anēr* carefully constructed to appeal to both a Christian and a pagan audience. Porphyry, on the other hand, employs a series of arcane motifs in his presentation of the pagan 'saint'. That pioneering work demonstrated the variety of approach with which even the earliest 'proto-hagiographers' went about their literary mission.

In a critical response to that book, John Dillon suggests that some hagiographies are in fact rather more like what he calls 'straight' biography, and that we would do well to think of a 'sliding scale between theoretical extremes of factuality and fantasy'.[55] He concludes with Damascius' *Life of Isidore*, and in noting with surprise the elements of criticism and even comedy it includes ('It is rather as if an ancient gold-encrusted icon of some whiskery old saint looked out at one from the iconostasis of late antiquity—and *winked*') Dillon surmises that 'Damascius has written something much more interesting than a hagiography'.[56] That desire to exclude from hagiography interesting literary strategies—a self-fulfilling prophecy, of course—is resisted in this section. The papers here show that such hagiographical winks are numerous enough that we perhaps do not need to push the texts in which they come closer to biography, but rather adjust our expectations of hagiographical writing.

Christa Gray begins this section with indecision. The possibility that saints might change their minds does not fit easily with the image of a saint as an embodied catalogue of perfect virtue. Yet such flexibility is at the heart of Jerome's hagiographical writings, where saints can be swayed through supplication. Gray investigates the significance of these scenes and posits that supplication, although it played little role in ancient handbooks of rhetoric, was used by Jerome not just as a tool of characterisation but as a structural device to to drive plot in his three saints' lives. Again, implicit parallels with Athanasius' *Life of Antony*—as discussed also in Corke-Webster and Ross' papers—suggest that Jerome deliberately adopts this unusual literary strategy as part of a literary debate over sanctity and the proper means of its memorialisation.

A more serious challenge to the notion of the saint as immutably perfect comes in the rather unexpected shape of hagiographical humour. There is a tradition that sees laughter as contrary to the entire Christian, and especially monastic, way of life: after all, Benedict of Nursia appears to outlaw it entirely in his *Rule*.[57] But while humour can be difficult to diagnose

---

[54] Miller, *Biography in Late Antiquity*.
[55] Dillon, "Holy and Not So Holy", 156 and 164.
[56] Dillon, "Holy and Not So Holy", 164.
[57] *Rule of Benedict* 4 (a list of 'instruments of good works'), 53–4: *Verba vana aut risui apta non loqui. Risum multum aut excussum non amare* ('Not to speak useless words or words that move to laughter. Not to love much or boisterous laughter.'); ch. 6.6 *Scurrilitates vero vel verba otiosa et risum moventia aeterna clausura in omnibus locis damnamus et ad talia eloquia discipulum aperire os non permittimus* ('But as for coarse jests and idle words or words that move to laughter, these we condemn everywhere with a perpetual ban, and for such conversation we do not permit a disciple to open [his] mouth.'); ch. 7.59: *Decimus humilitatis gradus est, si non sit facilis ac promptus in risu, quia scriptum est: Stultus in risu exaltat vocem suam* ('The tenth degree of humility is that he be not ready and quick to laugh, for it is written, "The fool lifts up his voice in laughter" (Eccles. 21:23)'). The Latin text is from the Biblioteca Benedictina Intratext: http://www.intratext.com/X/LAT0011.HTM (last accessed 19/06/2019), and the English translation is by

with certainty in any type of literature, it is possible to find, even in texts that appear hagiographical, incongruities where expectations are set up in a narrative and then deflated. This causes a sense of unease which laughter can help to dissipate. Humorous intentions appear more probable when the incongruities involve physical acts or parts of the body. It is hardly surprising to find the holy protagonists' evil opponent as the targets of such humour, as hagiographers were happy to use this tactic to prevent readers from empathising with their villains. But in some hagiographical texts there is a real risk that the reader may be made complicit in laughing at, rather than with, the saint him or herself. Reviewing the antics of one Macarius, the protagonist of a sixth century Coptic hagiographical compilation, and a dirty, ignorant, bungler of a saint, Konstantin Klein finds a different kind of holy fool from the famous Symeon (considered also in Van Pelt's paper). Klein likens the farcical humour of this text to that typical of *mimus* performances, a regular form of entertainment dismissed as vulgar by many elites. Combining entertainment with edification, this hagiography serves ultimately to shed light on the sanctity of another, Shenoute, who enjoys regular cameos.

Another unexpected element in hagiography is eroticism, which can reveal, rather startlingly, how conceptually complex the hagiographer's task could be. Building on earlier work on the novel (note again the parallel with characterisation above), Virginia Burrus' pioneering work has confounded typical views of hagiography as prudish, revealing instead how they harnessed a 'countereroticism'.[58] Erotic thoughts and relationships in some hagiographies do not merely feature negatively in the context of suppression, as one would conventionally expect; instead the dynamic structures of erotic fantasies are part of the narrative's positive framework. In other words, desires familiar from the sexual sphere are turned into a vehicle for the reader's enjoyment of the tale. Burrus' approach has inspired a rich body of work on the hagiographical appeal to its readers' sexual instincts that continues apace today.[59]

Developing this investigation of eroticism in hagiography, Klazina Staat's essay in this volume considers the impact of the motif of secrecy on plot construction as she looks at the treatment of the problematic phenomenon of chaste marriage in two works of hagiography, Jerome's *Life of Malchus* and the lesser-known *Life of Amator* by Stephen of Africa. Both texts' unpredictable and at times uneasy use of concealment and revelation is designed, Staat suggests, to mould audience reception. But the degree to which the audience is let in on the secret or kept in the dark compared to the text's internal audience, varies, and is determined by very different social contexts. This not only contribute to both edification and pleasure in the reading experience, but can involve readers—through the ascetic limitation of knowledge—in the sanctity of subject and text.

Leonard J. Doyle OblSB, last revised in 2001, taken from the official website of the Order of St Benedict: http://archive.osb.org/rb/text/toc.html l (last accessed 19/06/2019).

[58] Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2nd edition 2007).

[59] See, for example, Sarah Schäfer-Althaus, "Painful Pleasure: Saintly Torture on the Verge of Pornography", *Mirabilia* 18 (2014), 151–9.

The last essay in the volume, that of Anne Alwis, uses two later hagiographies to investigate metaphrasis, a process common in Byzantine hagiography in which new versions of earlier texts were created which systematically revised their originals. Alwis' analysis of the Byzantine metaphrasis of the martyrdom of Tatiana argues that the author makes systematic changes not simply as a stylistic exercise or a demonstration of his literary skill but as a means, via heightened characterisation and clearer plot development, of eliciting an emotive response from the audience. An analogous analysis of the sixth- or seventh-century *vita* of Mary of Egypt demonstrates how such changes could be used to explore and alter the balance between fiction and reality. This late Byzantine focus reveals simultaneously the traditional and innovative ways in which hagiographies continued to be brought into being.

The aims of the Volume

Recent classical scholarship has been obsessed with rehabilitation. The demonstration of a dismissed ancient author's hidden genius has become the bread and butter of doctoral monographs, while neglected forms of writing previously on the margins of scholarship are prime fodder for conferences and grant proposals. In some cases this has led to the birth of entirely new scholarly industries.[60] Hagiography is in the midst of such a rehabilitation (though it remains to be seen whether it will catalyse a similar explosion of interest). This volume also celebrates hagiography's weirder and more wonderful corners. But its contributors take hagiography's literary value for granted. They thus look beyond rehabilitation, to try to take stock of where the study of hagiography has got to, and attempt to lay out lines for future research.

We are the first to admit that this treatment is neither comprehensive nor definitive. There are obvious neglected areas (notably, for example, Georgian, Armenian, and Arabic hagiography, and the relationship with non-Christian hagiography).[61] The question of transmission and reception would have deserved its own focus: the liturgical use of hagiography means that its dissemination tends to be different from other types of literature.[62] Furthermore, the three sections overlap considerably with each other, though we consider this a strength. We have encouraged our contributors to identify and explore shared thematic interests, though we have not imposed terms or criteria upon them, as will be obvious in their different approaches. The selection of topics and methodologies reveals a rich literary variety in hagiographical writings. But they are united, we believe, in revealing the importance of literature—and the flexibility of its construction—to an evolving discussion of what sanctity meant through late antiquity and beyond. Hagiographical writings were the arena in which that important debate took place, and these essays reveal something of the ways—via person, form,

[60] The rapid rise of the ancient novel—long dismissed as the ancient equivalent of Mills and Boon literature, now recognised as a repository for some of the most sophisticated Greek literary reflection on the nature of empire—is perhaps the best example.
[61] Well treated in Efthymiadis' *Ashgate Research Companion*.
[62] On the questions raised by this subject see Marc Van Uytfanghe, "L'hagiographie antique tardive: Une littérature populaire?", *Antiquité Tardive* 9 (2001), 201–18.

and technique, and whether traditional, innovative, or both—in which their authors brought them into being, and how they thereby contributed to that ongoing debate. Sainthood, in other words, was constructed less of criteria than of conversation.

The consequences of that literary arena were of course not just felt on the page. It is now generally accepted that how texts are written has repercussions not just for literary studies but also for historical work. Texts do not merely reflect but construct reality. Stories are not so much prima facie evidence of real-world conditions and events, but attempts to make sense of experiences through narrative (rather than philosophical-scientific) logic. Hagiography was no exception. Saintly stories provided a space for interpreting and communicating Christian theological and moral teaching as it developed, for imaginatively exploring the consequences of adopting these convictions in one's life, as well as what that life should look like more broadly. Moreover, group identity—political, tribal, or, most pertinently, religious—is articulated not only through abstract beliefs but through the stories in which these beliefs are encoded and rituals in which the stories are enacted.[63] Careful, sensitive analysis of such stories can thus provide important insights into the experiences, values, and convictions of the groups that produced and consumed them. Our papers constantly return to this interplay between life and art. We hope therefore that this volume can serve as a spur to future work on hagiography's place in the evolution of literary narrative and contribute to wider understandings of sanctity, through the 'classical' world, the Middle Ages, and Byzantium. With that in mind, a brief Postscript by Lucy Grig draws together some of the principal insights gained from the collection and points out possible avenues for these next steps.

Bibliography

Aigrain, René, *L'hagiographie. Ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire* (Brussels, Société des Bollandistes, 1953 (reprinted with additional bibliography in 2000)).

Barnes, Timothy D. *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History*. Tria Corda 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010 (2nd ed. 2016)).

Bowersock, Glen, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

[63] This model corresponds to Emile Durkheim's account of religion as made up of beliefs, rituals, and experiences: Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 2nd English ed. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976) (first published as *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: le système totémique en Australie* (Paris: Alcan, 1912)).

Boyarin, Daniel, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012).

Brakke, David, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

Brown, Peter, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity", *JRS* 61 (1971), 80–101; reprinted in idem, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 103–52.

Brown, Peter, "The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity", *Representations* 2 (1983), 1–25.

Brown, Peter, "Arbiters of the Holy: The Christian Holy Man in Late Antiquity", in idem, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 57–78.

Brown, Peter, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971–1997", *JECS* 6.3, (1998), 352–76.

Brown, Peter, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

Bossu, Annelies, Koen De Temmerman, and Danny Praet, "The Saint as an Astute Heroine: Rhetoric and Characterization in the *Passio Caeciliae*", *Mnemosyne* 69.3 (2016), 433–52.

Burridge, Richard A., *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*. Monograph Series Society for New Testament Studies 70 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992 (2nd ed. with a foreword by W. Stanton Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2004)).

Burrus, Virginia, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2nd edition 2007).

Cameron, Averil, "Apologetics in the Roman Empire—A Genre of Intolerance?", in Jean-Michel Carrié and Rita Lizzi Testa (eds.), *Humana Sapit: études d'Antiquité tardive offertes à Lellia Cracco Ruggini* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 219–27.

Cox [Miller], Patricia, *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man*. The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

Cox Miller, Patricia, "'Differential Networks': Relics and Other Fragments in Late Antiquity", *JECS* 6 (1998), 113–38.

Cox Miller, Patricia, "Strategies of Representation in Collective Biography: Constructing the Subject as Holy", in Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*. The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 31 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 209–54.

De Temmerman, Koen, *Crafting Characters: Heroes and Heroines in the Ancient Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Delehaye, Hippolyte, *Les légendes hagiographiques*, (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1905; 2nd edition Brussels: Subsidia Hagiographica, 1927); English translation by Donald Attwater, *The Legends of the Saints; With a Memoir of the Author by Paul Peeters* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1962).

Delehaye, Hippolyte, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires*. (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1921; 2nd edition Brussels: Subsidia Hagiographica, 1966).

Déroche, Vincent, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Robert Wiśniewski (eds.), *Culte des saints et littérature hagiographique*. Centre de recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, Monographies (Leuven: Peeters, in press).

Dillon, John, "Holy and Not So Holy: On the Interpretation of Late Antique Biography", in Brian McGing and Judith Mossmann (eds.), *The Limits of Ancient Biography* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006), 155–67.

Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 2nd English ed. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976) (first published as *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: le système totémique en Australie* (Paris: Alcan, 1912)).

Edwards, Mark, "Biography and the Biographic", in Edwards and Swain, *Portraits*, 227–34.

Edwards, Mark and Simon Swain (eds.), *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

Efthymiadis, Stephanos, "Introduction", in idem (ed.), *Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, Vol. 1 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 1–14.

Elsner, Jaś, "From the Culture of Spolia to the Cult of Relics: The Arch of Constantine and the Genesis of Late Antique Forms", *PBSR* 68 (2000), 149–84.

Fagan, Garth, "**The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society",** *JHS* 102 (1982), 33–59.

Frend, William H. C., *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965).

Fontaine, Jacques, "Unité et diversité du mélange des genres et des tons chez quelques écrivains latins de la fin du IVe siècle: Ausone, Ambroise, Ammien", in Manfred Fuhrmann (ed.), *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'antiquité tardive en Occident*. Entretiens sur l'Antiquite Classique 23 (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1977), 425–82.

Frickenschmidt, Dirk, *Evangelium als Biographie. Die vier Evangelien im Rahmen antiker Erzählkunst.* Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 22 (Tübingen: Francke, 1997).

Gibbon, Edward, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Vol. IV: The End of the Roman Empire* (London: Allan Lane, 1994)

Godding, Robert, Bernard Joassart, Xavier Lequeux, François de Vriendt, and Joseph van der Straeten, *Bollandistes, saints et légendes. Quatre siècles de recherche hagiographique* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 2007).

Goldsmid Montefiore, Claude, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* (London: Macmillan, 1930).

Greatrex, Geoffrey and Hugh Elton (eds.), *Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015).

Hadas, Moses and Morton Smith, *Heroes and Gods: Spiritual Biographies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

Hägg, Tomas, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

Hägg, Tomas, *The Art of Biography in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Høgel, Christian, "Literary Aspects of Greek Byzantine Hagiography: A Bibliographical Survey", *SO* 72 (1997), 164–71.

Howard-Johnston, James and Paul A. Hayward (eds.), *The Cult of the Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Krueger, Derek, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Le totémisme aujourd'hui* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962).

L'Orange, Hans Peter, *Art Forms and Civic Life in the Late Roman Empire*, trans. Knut Berg and Mrs Berg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).

Louth, Andrew, "Hagiography", in Young, Ayres, and Louth, *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, 358–61.

Louth, Andrew, "The Literature of the Monastic Movement", in Young, Ayres, and Louth (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, 373–381.

Ludlow, Morwenna, "Texts, Teachers and Pupils in the Writings of Gregory of Nyssa", in Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen, *Literature and Society*, 83–102.

Martin, Dale, "Introduction", in Dale Martin and Patricia Cox Miller (eds.), *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism and Historiography* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 1–21.

Merkelbach, Reinhold, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich and Berlin: Beck, 1963).

Miller, Dale and Patricia J. Miller, *The Gospel of Mark as Midrash on Earlier Jewish and New Testament Literature*. Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 21 (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1990).

Momigliano, Arnaldo, *The Development of Greek Biography*. Carl Newell Jackson Lectures (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1971).

Momigliano, Arnaldo, "Ancient Biography and the Study of Religion in the Roman Empire", in idem, *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 159–77.

Mratschek, Sigrid, "A Living Relic for the Bishop of Rome: Strategies of Visualization in a Civil Case", in Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen, *Literature and Society*, 134–56.

Papaconstantinou, Arietta (ed.), *Writing 'True Stories': Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

Pratsch, Thomas, *Der hagiographische Topos. Griechische Heiligenviten in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit*. Millenium Studies 6 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2005).

Rapp, Claudia, "The Origins of Hagiography and the Literature of Early Monasticism: Purpose and Genre between Tradition and Innovation," in Richard Flower, Christopher Kelly, and Michael S. Williams (eds.), *Unclassical Traditions. Alternatives to the Classical Past in Late Antiquity*. Vol. 1. Cambridge Classical Journal Supplements 34 (Cambridge, 2010), 119–30.

Rapp, Claudia, "Author, Audience, Text and Saint: Two Modes of Early Byzantine Hagiography", *Scandinavian Journal of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 1 (2015), 111–29.

Roberts, Michael, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

Schäfer-Althaus, Sarah, "Painful Pleasure: Saintly Torture on the Verge of Pornography", *Mirabilia* 18 (2014), 151–9.

Scourfield, J. H. David (ed.), *Texts and Culture in Late Antiquity: Inheritance, Authority, and Change* (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2007).

Swain, Simon, "Biography and the Biographic in the Literature of the Roman Empire", in Edwards and Swain, *Portraits*, 1–37.

Talbert, Charles H., *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke–Acts*. Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 20 (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1974).

Taylor, Justin, “The Acts of the Apostles as Biography”, in McGing and Mossmann, *The Limits of Ancient Biography*, 77–88.

Van Hoof, Lieve and Peter Van Nuffelen (eds.), *Literature and Society in the Fourth Century AD: Performing Paideia, Constructing the Present, Presenting the Self* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

Van Uytfanghe, Marc, “L’hagiographie: un ‘genre’ chrétien ou antique tardif?”, *AB* 111 (1993), 135–88.

Van Uytfanghe, Marc, “L’hagiographie antique tardive: Une littérature populaire?”, *Antiquité Tardive* 9 (2001), 201–18.

Van Uytfanghe, Marc, “La vie d’Apollonius de Tyane et le discours hagiographique”, in Kristoffel Demoen and Danny Praet (eds.) *Theios Sophistès: Essays on Flavius Philostratus’ Vita Apollonii*. Mnemosyne Supplements 305 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 335–74.

van Ommeslaeghe, Flor, “The Acta Sanctorum and Bollandist Methodology”, in Sergei Hackel (ed.), *The Byzantine Saint* (London: Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 1981), 155–63.

Williams, Michael S., *Authorised Lives in Early Christian Biography: Between Eusebius and Augustine* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Young, Frances, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Zeitlin, Froma, “Religion in the Ancient Novel”, in Tim Whitmarsh (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 91–108.